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Committee On Children – Public Hearing February 5, 2015

## **SUPPORT Senate *Raised Bill No. 207***

*AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR A LYME DISEASE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM.*

February 4, 2015

Attending Hearing Date: Thursday, February 5th: YES

Dear Distinguished Members of the Committee on Children:

I am in full support of the Raised Bill #207; ***AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR A LYME DISEASE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM***

Every member of my family (four in total) has been infected with Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease. My daughter, now aged 15, has suffered the greatest with chronic illness due to the infection going undiagnosed and untreated for approximately five years (since about aged 5).

She has suffered many horrific symptoms ranging from chronic neurological pain, paralysis at times, temporary blindness in one eye, debilitating fatigue, inconsistent cognitive function, unable to find words or speak properly, memory loss (all of sudden forgetting how to tie her shoe, know where her school is, unable to recognize her friends, etc.). She has been unable to attend school for periods of months at a time and has worked harder than most will ever work, to catch up and stay in the “norm” range for her age group.

Life as a teen with a chronic illness has been very isolating and emotionally taxing. This disease has taken control of her life and our family’s life; physically, financially, emotionally, spiritually and has intertwined in every aspect of our daily lives.

As a mother/parent, I can only keep saying to myself, “I wish I KNEW more about the disease. I WISH I KNEW more back then. Maybe I could have caught it in time and her life/our lives would be so different. I KNEW something was wrong.” I took her back and forth to doctors for years with bizzare symptoms. I wish I KNEW more about how to recognize symptoms, how to understand how to avoid tick-ridden areas, the risks associated with getting a tick-bite, how to remove a tick quickly, etc.

This journey, as horrific as it has been, has also made me passionate about being sure NO OTHER CONNECTICUT FAMILIES NEED TO SUFFER. As with many things, education is key. I have committed myself to working with some wonderful people who have also taken on the mission to help educate unsuspecting residents about preventing or minimizing the risks of a tick-bite. The Ridgefield Lyme Disease Task Force has developed a simple, but powerful prevention program that can be used state-wide to help our residents stay safe, healthy and still enjoy the beautiful outdoors that Connecticut offers. I have volunteered at health fairs and

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symposiums run by the Ridgefield Task Force. They reach hundreds of people at any one event. Their ability, drive and commitment has inspired me to continue with my mission to help others as well.

My dream has been to spread the word and educate on this disease and its risks. I am grateful that the Committee on Children and the State Department of Public Health have come together as one in helping our residents/families be educated on this health risk. Community-based education is essential in reducing the incidence of Lyme/Tick-Borne diseases in Connecticut and encourages early diagnosis which is crucial in preventing the disease from causing chronic-long-term effects.

PLEASE, as a Connecticut resident, a mother of a chronically ill child, a family member and as a Lyme/Tick-Borne disease survivor, I implore you to support this very simple, yet powerful bill. Giving financial funding to proven prevention programs is an important step in reducing the incidence of this disease in our state.

Thank you so very much for your careful consideration in keeping our CT residents, namely our Connecticut children, healthy.

Very truly yours;

Marie L. Benedetto